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SOURCES DIVISION INDICATIONS JOURNAL

23 August 1955

Chinese Communists Developing New Coastal Supply Route into Foochow Area

The Chinese Communists have been developing since June a new sea-road route for supply of the Foochow area opposite the Nationalist-held Matsus. Traffic over this route, which avoids Nationalist offshore island positions, is an important supplement to costly overland truck hauls across Fukien.

Photography of recent months indicates the use of a protected inshore route for small freighter movements south along the Chekiang and Fukien coast into Santa and Loyuan Bays, just north of the Matsus, where supplies can be transferred to trucks for delivery over recently built roads to the Foochow area.

The first photo coverage showing small (300 - 500 ton) coastwise ship activity in these Bays occurred on 17 June when a 120-foot freighter and five motor junks were seen hove-to in the entrance to Santa Bay. A similar size ship was noted in Santa Bay on 20 June. On 30 July, a 100-foot cargo vessel was noted alongside a wharf near the new Loyuan bridge and two 85 - 90 foot barges were seen in Loyuan Bay near a beach transfer point on the new road from Loyuan to Santa Bay. On 31 July, a 100-foot cargo vessel and three motor vessels with 50 - 65 foot barges alongside were seen underway in the vicinity of Santa Island.

These vessels probably operate from Shacheng, 80 miles to the north of Santa, which is being used as a minor naval operating base for patrol activities and as an anchorage point for small cargo vessels similar to those sighted in Santa and Loyuan Bays. Photography of 27 June showed four cargo ships ranging from 100 to 125 feet at anchor in Shacheng, along with several naval patrol craft. On 13 August, a 106-foot cargo vessel and a number of naval craft were again noted in Shacheng. Shacheng is north of the effective range of operation of Nationalist naval units and can be safely reached by supply vessels from Chekiang ports or Shanghai.

The Communists appear to have taken several steps to protect this new supply route south of Shacheng. Limited naval and air patrols of this coastal stretch have been instituted and recently strengthened defense positions on coastal islands between Shacheng and the Santa area provide further protection to shipping. Positions have been photographed on: Shacheng, Fu Yao Island, Angel Island, Town Island, Shuang Feng Island, Chih Chu Island, at the entrance to Loyuan Bay and on Santa Island.

Despite the small size of the vessels (300 - 500 tons capacity) being used in this new supply operation, they can carry a substantial volume of cargo, significantly adding to the logistic capacity of routes into the Foochow area, now primarily dependent for supplies on costly truck hauls over a 300-mile mountainous road from Shanghai on the Chekiang-Kiangsi Railroad. These small vessels can move close inshore, under cover of darkness, and can be unloaded in a few hours, making it difficult to impose a successful blockade against their operations.

Note: Also submitted as item for Part II of OCI Weekly Review.

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